

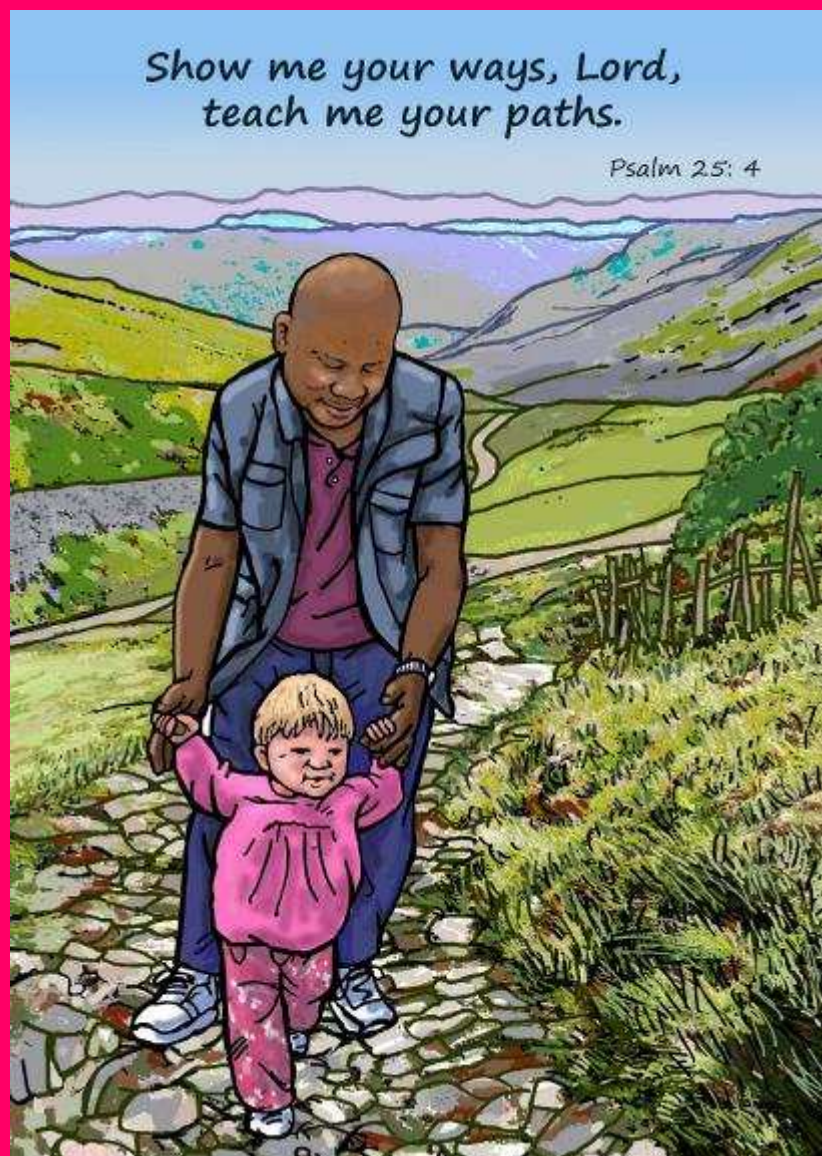
May 2026

FOCUS

Issue 303



Parish Magazine of St Stephen's, Hightown



Christian Aid Week 10th to 16th May

Editor's Note

"Maidens who rise early on May Day, walk barefoot, and wash their faces in the dew, will become beautiful."



Where this interesting piece of folk-lore came from, I have no recollection, but I learnt it when I was quite small. I, in my turn, related it to my daughter when she was small. She, consequently, attempted to put it into practice, along with her friend who had been sleeping over the previous night. On that particular First of May, at the crack of dawn, they crept quietly down the stairs, without shoes or socks, let themselves out of the back door, unseen, and pranced around in some very cold wet grass near the hen house, performing the ritual. The immediate results were disappointing; feet covered in hen muck, being scolded by me, being late for school that day on account of having to have a shower, and catching a cold (probably from a friend at school but attributed by my mother to this rash act.)

However, the long term effect seems to have been satisfactory for both of them. And as every little girl will have been told, as they are having the tangles brushed out of their hair: "Suffer for beauty".

The year is edging closer and closer to Saturday 18th July and THE event of the village year: The Hightown Village Show. Now is the time to consider what, from your garden, you may like to enter, (weather permitting), and how to achieve that goal! Details of the various categories will be posted on Hightown Village Facebook page well in advance. Printed schedules will be posted through all doors in the run-up to the show.

Let's hope for some lovely mild weather in May.

Colette.

Entries for future issues of Focus to be sent to
Focus.Mag.2023@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Please submit before last day of month

Dear Friends,

As I write, we have just shared together in the journey through Holy Week, and celebrated Easter Day. What a joyful day it was too, with so many friends at church for the morning Eucharist.... we ran out of service sheets and folks had to share! Wonderful! Thank you to all who attended over the week, and all who helped in any way. The church looked beautiful for Easter.



We are still in the season of Eastertide, and we have three significant days of celebration in our church calendar this month:

Ascension Day on Thursday 14th, Pentecost on Sunday 24th and Trinity Sunday on 31st.

Ascension Day celebrates Christ's exaltation. While on earth, he was a servant. Now in heaven, he is the ruler and Lord of all. By entering heaven as the representative of humankind, he completed the work of our salvation and guarantees the eventual glorification, the final, perfected state, of all who love Him.

At Pentecost, we remember and give thanks for the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and other disciples. God sent his Holy Spirit to empower the Church to perform the mission which the risen Jesus Christ has entrusted to it. It is often called the 'Birthday of the Church' and marks the fulfilment of Jesus' promise to send a guide to empower all disciples to share their faith. What a birthday gift to receive!

Finally, at the very end of the month, we celebrate Trinity Sunday honouring and affirming our God in three persons: God the Creator (Father), Saviour (Son) and Comforter (Holy Spirit).

At St Stephen's, we will be celebrating each special feast day, and sharing with our friends in Formby at St Peter's for Ascension Day. Do come along and celebrate with us, not just on feast days, but at any of our services! You are more than welcome.

'Holy Spirit come, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Amen'.

God Bless,
Keith

Church Services at St Stephen's in May

Friday 1 st	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 3 rd Fifth of Easter	10:30	All-Age Eucharist
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 6 th	10:30	Eucharist
Friday 8 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 10 th Sixth of Easter	10:30	Eucharist
	16:00	Toddler Church
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 13 th	10:30	Eucharist
	19:00	Sanctuary @ Seven
Thursday 14 th	19:30	Ascension Day- St Peter, Formby
Friday 15 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 17 th Seventh of Easter	10:30	Eucharist
	18:00	Evensong
Wednesday 20 th	10:30	Eucharist
Friday 22 nd	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 24 th Pentecost	10:30	Eucharist
	18:00	BCP Holy Communion
Wednesday 27 th	10:30	Eucharist
Friday 29 th	09:30	Morning Prayer
Sunday 31 st Trinity	10:30	Eucharist
	18:00	Evensong



Coffee Morning
First Saturday of Every Month
10 till noon
St Stephen's Hall



Come and enjoy a bacon or sausage barm and a cup of tea or coffee. All proceeds in May to Christian Aid.

'Word Together'

Bible Study

Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday

2pm

St Stephen's Church

'Souper Troopers'
Mondays

Noon-til- 2
in the Church Hall
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**Please do come along for company
and a tasty bowl of soup! Give what
you can!**

'Souper Troopers Summer Season'

Our last lunch with soup will be Monday 27th April 26. We will be continuing over the summer months offering a sandwich/buffet lunch and a cold dessert. All still most welcome and still 'pay as you can' donation basket. Prayer Ministry is always available. Not meeting on Bank Holidays 4th and 25th May.



Christian Aid Week is a powerful expression of what can happen when compassion leads to action.

It's our shared moment to come together – across churches, communities and households – to stand alongside people living in poverty around the world.

For one week each year, thousands of people across Britain and Ireland give, fundraise, pray and act together. Together those actions make change possible.

Where hardship means hunger...urban farmers can grow hope.

In the informal settlement of Dagoretti in Nairobi, many parents wake each morning knowing they must earn money that day. If they do not, their children may not eat that night.

For Fridah Moraa, this pressure is constant. She is a recently widowed grandmother and the sole provider for her family. Rent, school costs, water and food all depend on what she can earn.

Life in Dagoretti

Fridah lives with her children and grandson in a rented corrugated metal shelter. There is no running water and space is extremely limited. Many families in Dagoretti manage just two meals a day. Some manage only one.

To support her family, Fridah sells vegetables at a market stall. With no refrigeration or storage, she travels long distances to buy produce, six days a week. Some days she earns enough. Some days she does not.

‘Sometimes I don’t know how I’ll buy food. I don’t know how I’ll feed my family.’

A small plot with big impact

Fridah's situation began to change when she joined Imarisha Kilimo, an urban farming project run by Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope.



At first, the idea felt impossible. 'I was wondering, where can someone farm here?' Through training, tools and seeds, Fridah learned how to grow food in small city spaces. She learned how to use cone gardens, make compost and conserve water.

'I discovered I could sow here. Right where I stand.' in Nairobi?', she said.

At the end of a narrow alley near her home, Fridah now tends her own urban farm. She grows kale, tomatoes and indigenous vegetables. Some feed her family. Some she sells.

For Fridah, this means more than food. It means stability and choice.

'Now I can plan. I can buy this; I can buy that. I can help my family.'

Faith and determination Fridah's faith sustains her through difficult days. It strengthens her resolve to keep going and to provide for her children.

It's hard, but in God I trust, for the strength to keep going every day.

Her urban farm is small, but it carries big hopes. Hopes for education, independence and a future beyond daily uncertainty.

Enclosed within the Focus, you will find a Christian Aid envelope. If you are able, please place your donation inside and post it through St Stephen's Church letterbox or hand it in at The Village Store. Many thanks.

To find out more, please visit The Christian aid website:

www.christianaid.org.uk



Who's Who at St Stephen's

Vicar	Revd Keith Thornborough
Associate Priest	Revd John Reed
Warden	Judith Welch Judith.Churchwarden@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Warden	Jane Copeland Jane.Churchwarden@StStephensHightown.org.uk
PCC Secretary	Beryl Howard
PCC Treasurer	Keith Aldis
Gift Aid Secretary	Brian Taylor
Safeguarding	Cath Marshall cathmarshall47@yahoo.co.uk
Electoral Roll	Beth Cresswell
Sacristan Team	Hazel Roberts
Health and Safety	<i>TBA</i>
Flower Rota	Sue Taylor
CMS Secretary	Berenice Gibson
St Stephen's Youth Club	Jane Bessant
Church Hall Bookings	Sally Fraser
Focus Editor	Colette Hudson: Focus.Mag.2023@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Focus Adverts	Colette Hudson Adverts@StStephensHightown.org.uk
Focus Distribution	Mr and Mrs K Bradshaw
St Stephen's Church Website	StStephensHightown.org.uk

Sunday Coffee Rota

May

3rd	Jayne Cudby
10th	Dave Phillips
17th	Jane Copeland
24th	Margaret Bird
31st	Di Aldis

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Brass Rota

May

Beth Cresswell



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Dates for your Diary:

28th August Family BBQ

26th Sept Cocktail Evening

28th November Christmas Fayre

Further details to be published

Smile Lines - a typo in a church bulletin:

The organist invites any members of the congregation who enjoy sinning to volunteer.

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Village Organisations and Activities

Tuesday Group, St Stephen's Hall Tuesday morning 10.30am	Beryl Howard & Jan Branigan
Hightown Friendship Group 1st Wednesday at 8pm St Stephen's Hall	Marjorie Walker
Gardening Club 2nd Monday 8pm St Stephen's Hall	Hilary Munro
Bowling Club, Sandy Lane	Diana Killen
Hightown Club	Chris Scrine
Blundellsands Sailing Club	Rohan Pickard RohanPickard@gmail.com Deryk Johnson DerykJ@gmail.com
Yoga Classes, Hightown Club	Rose Billinge
Flower Show	Debbie Underhill underhillsathome@aol.com
Open Mic Poetry Group 3rd Thursday 7.30pm St Stephen's Church hall	Sally Anne tapiabowes@gmail.com Alex
Craft Group, Every Thursdays 1.30-3.30pm, St Stephen's Hall	Sue Taylor
Hightown Parish Council	Jenny Farrar clerk@hightownparishcouncil.uk www.hightownparishcouncil.uk
Community Library, Alt Centre, Lower Alt Rd. Mon 12-2, Weds 11.30-12.30, Fri 10-12	Linda Munro lindamunro@hotmail.com
Zumba Gold, Dance for all aged 55 plus, Mondays 9.45-10.30, St Stephen's Hall	Nicky Garsforth
Creo Dance Company Mon Tues Wed Thurs Sat Children 3 to 18 years	Georgia Cardwell

Eco tips for May from A Rocha UK



Support pollinators. Nothing says spring like the buzz of a bee! But these precious pollinators are declining due to habitat loss, climate change and agricultural intensification. Wednesday 20 May is World Bee Day, so look around to see how you can improve habitats for bees and other pollinators. Read more about bees,

butterflies and habitats that support them in our Target 25 resources at arocha.org.uk/what-we-do/target-25.

Sow a pollinator-friendly seed mix, make or buy a bee hotel, let some wild flowers grow in your garden, and don't use pesticides. Pray that our pollinator populations will increase.

For more about World Bee Day visit: awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/world-bee-day/. These small actions make a big difference and are just some of the ways we can live out our calling to care for God's creation. See our blog on looking after wildlife in the heat for more warm weather eco tips: arocha.org.uk/looking-after-wildlife-in-the-heat/. Visit arocha.org.uk for more!



Free Tennis in Hightown

With the cost of living ever mounting, it's great to be offered a free activity, for the whole age range, on our doorsteps. The tennis section are volunteering their time and skills to provide junior coaching and fun mini games from 11.30am to 12.30pm, adult coaching from 12.30pm to 1.30pm,

family on court time from 1.30pm to 2.30pm. No equipment is needed and all ages and abilities are welcome. Whether you're with your family or on your own, there's sure to be a fun and friendly atmosphere.

God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Humility

A few years ago, I visited the Smithsonian Museum's Hall of Human Origins. Our guide, the curator of anthropology, was keen to help Christians understand his research.

Whatever you make of the

evidence for human evolution,

the fact remains that other species a bit like us were around before we came on the scene – or in the case of Neanderthals, at the same time.

Part of the exhibit included lifelike reconstructions of the face and hair of several different hominins, displayed on pillars at the right height for each species. So, I could crouch down to 'meet' Homo floriensis or stand tall to look into the eyes of Homo heidelbergensis. Most of these – beings? creatures? – were on other branches of the evolutionary tree to us, and we share a common ancestor much further back. I did, however, feel as if I was meeting my forebears.

As I walked between the statues I asked myself, "Why us?" There's evidence that Neanderthals used symbolism as we do, and also buried their dead. Did they have the potential to evolve to a point where they could do similar things to us? The curator explained how, as the ice ages came and went, human beings moved around but other species appear to have stayed put and suffered the consequences – they just weren't ready yet for that big change. As I took in the displays about how we began to gather socially around a fire, make music or write, I felt humbled. We managed to adapt, but we could so easily have



(continued from previous page)

disappeared with the rest.

In his book *The Message of Creation*, theologian David Wilkinson shares his view that being made in the image of God has nothing to do with our own cleverness or abilities, but instead it is a gift. God created us on purpose (I believe through the long slow process of evolution) and chose to enter into a relationship with us, making us His representatives on earth.

Thankfully I don't have to figure out how to interact with other human-like hominins today. I do, however, have an equal share in humankind's God-given commission to tend and keep creation. Am I ready to go further than ensuring my own species' survival - not necessarily because we have evolved further than our ice-age ancestors, but because I have one of the 'new hearts' promised in Ezekiel 11:19? Can I work together, in a true spirit of humility, with people from all over the world to ensure the full diversity of life can flourish?.

Prayer Prompts for May From The Holy Bible

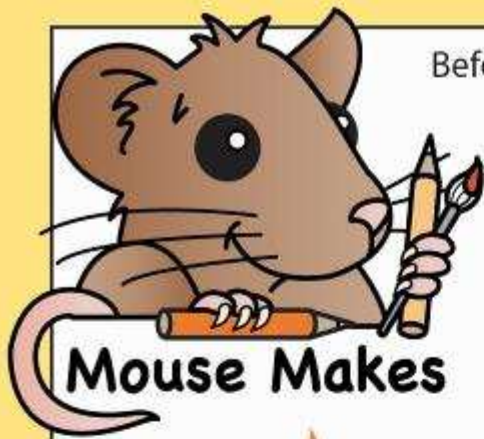
Week 1. Your dead shall live: their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. *Isaiah 26:19*

Week 2. Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." *John 11:25-26*

Week 3. I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Holy Spirit who reveals the truth about God....The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you. *John 14: 16-26*

Week 4: Then he led them out of the city as far as Bethany, where he raised his hands and blessed them. As he was blessing them, he departed from them and was taken up into Heaven. *Luke 24:50-53*

*Let us pray for the people of:
Blundell Rd, Blundell Avenue and Oakfield Road*



Before Jesus ascended to heaven he told his disciples
*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit
 has come upon you, and you will be my
 witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea
 and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"...*

*...When the day of Pentecost arrived,
 they were all together in one place,
 and they were all filled
 with the Holy Spirit."*



READ the story
 of Pentecost
 in Acts 1-2
 Look up the Bible
 verses to find
 the answers to the
 crossword clues.

How many
 words can you
 make from
 the letters of:
 DAY OF
 PENTECOST



- 1 After Jesus ascended into heaven, which
 city did the Apostles return to? Acts 1:12
 5a What did the Apostles devote themselves to?
 Acts 1:14
 6 Who was chosen to replace Judas? Acts 1:26
 5d Which special day was it? Acts 2:1

- 8 What rushing sound came from heaven? Acts 2:2
 2 What appeared? Tongues of ...? Acts 2:3
 4 What were the disciples filled with? Acts 2:4
 9 What did they start speaking in? Acts 2:4
 3 Who spoke to the crowd? Acts 2:14
 7 Who had prophesied this? Acts 2:16



ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL



EVERY 3RD SUNDAY @ 10:30AM



Magazine part-sponsored by John Gibson - notary services



Toddler Time

A new fun group for Toddlers 0-4yr and their carers!

St. Stephen's Church Hall

Fridays 10:00am-11:30am term time

Play- Craft- Snack- Story- Songs- Fun!

ALL WELCOME!

Toddler Church

St Stephen's Church

2nd Sunday of each month 4:00pm

A service for pre-schoolers and their families

Fun songs, a bible story, craft and refreshments

We look forward to meeting you!

Youth Club

From age 7

Friday Evening Term Time

6pm until 7:15pm

£2.00 includes snacks and drinks

Contact: Jane Bessant 07776 305 660

**Please note that there will be no youth club
during school holidays**